

WOMT Summary for March 18, 2008

For the week of March 17, the SWG recommended that the Projects continue operating to an average OMR flow more positive than -2,000 cfs. WOMT concurred with this recommendation, which represents a continuation of the determination from last week by the USFWS that an OMR flow more positive than -2000 cfs would be adequately protective of delta smelt.

This recommendation is made in recognition of the following: there is no detected presence of larval delta smelt at either facility, actions over the last week have helped to reduce entrainment of adult delta smelt, and the recent difficulty in achieving a stable and predictable OMR flow.

DWR reported that a 7-day average more positive than -2000 cfs will likely be achieved earlier than the expected Wednesday, March 19 date (seven days after the change in target from -3000 cfs to -2000 cfs was put into effect).

Recently, the actual observed tides have not matched the predicted tides throughout the Delta. As the target flow has become more restrictive, Reclamation and DWR have had more difficulty predicting and managing to OMR flows. The Projects also discovered that flow data posted by USGS is being corrected by significant amounts up to a week subsequent to the initial posting. All of these factors of uncertainty have required frequent real-time changes in operations and large pump units to be cycled on and off.

In addition, Reclamation and DWR reported that for three days during the week of March 10, the OMR flow was more negative than the targeted 7-day running average OMR of -3,000 cfs. The USGS measurements indicate OMR flows were more negative than the target amount by 100 cfs to 200 cfs. Reclamation and DWR are preparing a memorandum documenting events and actions taken. The preliminary assessment is that the lower flow values are partially the result of unanticipated and unpredicted tidal variations. The corrections to USGS data probably played a role as well. Despite the projects reduction of pumping on March 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th and 15th in response to the unpredicted circumstances, the OMR flow was more negative than the target. Because the amount of flow below the target was small, and because the 7-day average OMR flows for the days preceding and following these dates were well above the target flow -3,000 cfs, Reclamation, DWR, and USFWS believe that missing these three days of the OMR target was not detrimental to the smelt population.

FWS determined that the -2,000 OMR flow target, and the OMR flows for the week of March 10, adequately protect delta smelt. DFG determined the -2,000 cfs OMR target for delta smelt proposed by WOMT (in accordance with the Wanger Order) adequately protects longfin smelt. DFG based this decision on the current information regarding the distribution of longfin smelt adults and larvae, and the recent pattern of longfin smelt salvage.